

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

1 Introduction

The Contractor's Registration Board was established in 1990 and added to its' Board two new members, home inspectors, to govern the licensing of home inspectors in the State of Rhode Island. Effective July 1, 2001, all home inspectors and associate home inspectors must be licensed by the Board to perform fee paid home inspections. The State of Rhode Island objectives include promotion of excellence within the profession and continual improvement to the services provided to the public.

2 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of these Standards of Practice is to establish a minimum and uniform standard for licensed and associate home inspectors. Home inspections performed to these Standards of Practice are intended to provide the client with information regarding the condition of the systems and components of the home as inspected at the time of the home inspection.

2.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. Readily visible and accessible systems and components of homes listed in these standards of practice.
2. Installed systems and components of homes and items to determine at the time of the inspection that they are properly performing their intended function, with no regard to their future expected life as listed in these standards of practice.

B. Report:

1. Whether the house is occupied or not.
2. A written evaluation of all the items in the Standards of Practice to the client.
3. On those systems and components inspected which, in the professional opinion of the inspector, are significantly deficient or are near the end of their service life.
4. Reason why, if not self-evident, the system or component is significantly deficient or near the end of its service life.
5. The inspectors recommendations to correct or monitor the reported deficiency on any systems and components, designated for inspection in these Standards of Practice, which were present at the time of the home inspection, but were not inspected and a reason they were not inspected.

2.2 These Standards of Practice, are not intended to limit inspectors from

- A. Including other inspection services, systems, or components in addition to those required by these Standards of Practice.
- B. Specifying of repairs provided the inspector is appropriately qualified and willing to do so.
- C. Excluding systems and components from the inspection, if requested by the client.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

3 Structural System

3.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. The structural components, including foundations and framing.
2. Areas above suspended ceilings by removing a representative number of ceiling tiles.
3. By probing a representative number of structural components where deterioration is suspected or where clear indications of possible deterioration exists. Probing is not required when probing would damage any finished surface or where no deterioration is visible.

B. Describe:

1. The foundation and report the method used to inspect the under-floor crawl space.
2. The floor structure.
3. The wall structure.
4. The ceiling structure.
5. The roofs structure and report the methods used to inspect the attic.

3.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. Provide any engineering service or architectural service.
- B. Offer an opinion as to the adequacy of any structural system or component.

4 Exterior

4.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. The exterior wall covering, flashing, and trim.
2. All exterior doors.
3. Attached decks, balconies, stoops, steps, porches, and their associated railings.
4. The eaves, soffits, and facias, where accessible from the ground level.
5. The vegetation, grading, surface drainage, and retaining walls on the property when any of these are likely to adversely affect the building.
6. Walkways, patios, and driveways, leading to dwelling entrances.
7. Visible exterior portions of chimneys.

B. Describe:

1. The exterior wall covering.
2. A representative number of visible windows, whether single or multiple glazing with or without storms.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

4.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

1. Screening, storm windows, shutters, awnings, and similar seasonal accessories.
2. Fences.
3. Geological, geotechnical or hydrological conditions.
4. Recreational facilities.
5. Outbuildings.
6. Seawalls, break-walls, and docks.
7. Erosion control and earth stabilization measures.

5 Roof System

5.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. The roof covering.
2. The roof drainage systems.
3. The flashing.
4. The skylights, chimneys, and roof penetrations.

B. Describe the roof covering and report the methods used to inspect the roof.

5.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

1. Antennae.
2. Interiors of flues or chimneys which are not readily accessible.
3. Other installed accessories.
4. To walk on any roof surface where the surface may be damaged or destroyed by such action or is unsafe for the inspector.
5. To remove debris, snow, leaves, or any other conditions which may limit observations of the roof surface and the roof components.

6 Plumbing System

6.1 The Inspector Shall

A. Inspect:

1. The interior water supply and distribution systems including all plumbing fixtures and faucets.
2. The drain, waste, and vent systems including all fixtures.
3. The water heating equipment.
4. The vent systems, flues, and chimneys.
5. The fuel storage and fuel distribution systems.
6. The drainage sumps, sump pumps, and related piping.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

B. Describe:

1. The water supply, public and private, drain, waste, and vent piping material.
2. The water heating equipment, including the energy source.
3. The location of main water and main fuel shutoff valves.

6.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

1. The clothes washing machine connections (hoses).
2. The interiors of flues or chimney which are not readily accessible.
3. Wells, well pumps, or water storage related equipment.
4. Water conditioning systems.
5. Solar water heating systems.
6. Fire and lawn sprinkler systems.
7. Private waste disposal systems.

B. Determine:

1. Whether the waste disposal systems are public or private.
2. The quantity or quality of the water supplies.
3. Operate safety valves or shutoff valves.

7 Electrical Systems

7.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. the service drop
2. The service entrance conductors, cables and raceways.
3. The service equipment and main disconnects.
4. The service grounding.
5. The interior components of service panels and sub panels.
6. The conductors.
7. The overcurrent protection devices.
8. A representative number of installed lighting fixtures, switches, and receptacles.
9. The ground fault circuit interrupters.

B. Describe:

1. The amperage and voltage rating of the service.
2. The location of main disconnect(s) and sub panels.
3. The wiring methods.

C. Report:

1. On the presence of solid conductor aluminum branch circuit wiring.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

7.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

1. The remote controls devices unless the device is the only control device.
2. The alarm systems and components.
3. The low voltage wiring, systems and components.
4. The ancillary wiring, systems and components not a part of the primary electrical power distribution system.

B. Measure amperage, voltage, or impedance.

8 Heating System

8.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. The installed heating equipment.
2. The vent systems, flues, and chimneys.

B. Describe:

1. The energy source.
2. The heating method by its distinguishing characteristics.

8.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

1. The interiors of flues or chimneys which are not readily accessible.
2. The heat exchanger.
3. The humidifier or dehumidifier.
4. The electronic air filter.
5. The solar space heating system.

B. Determine heat supply adequacy or distribution balance.

9 Air conditioning systems

9.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect the installed central and through-wall cooling equipment.

B. Describe:

1. The energy source.
2. The cooling method by its distinguishing characteristics.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

9.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. Inspect electronic air filters.
- B. Determine cooling supply adequacy or distribution balance.
- C. Window style air condition units.
- D. Operate air conditioning equipment when the exterior temperature has been below 65 degrees F, or operate heat pumps in the heat mode when above 65 degrees F in the past 24 hours or when in the opinion of the inspector damage could occur to the system

10 Interior

10.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

- 1. The walls, ceilings, and floors.
- 2. The steps, stairways, and railings.
- 3. The countertops and a representative number of installed cabinets.
- 4. a representative number of doors and windows
- 5. Garage doors and garage door operators, and other related safety equipment.

10.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

- 1. The paint, wallpaper, and other finish treatments.
- 2. The carpeting.
- 3. The window treatments.
- 4. The central vacuum systems.
- 5. The household appliances.
- 6. Recreational facilities.

11 Insulation and ventilation

11.1 The inspector shall;

A. Inspect:

- 1. The insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
- 2. The ventilation of attics and foundation areas.
- 3. The mechanical ventilation systems.

B. Describe:

- 1. The insulation and vapor retarders in unfinished spaces.
- 2. The absence of insulation in unfinished spaces at conditioned surfaces.

11.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

- A. Disturb insulation or vapor retarders.
- B. Determine indoor air quality.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

12 Fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances

12.1 The inspector shall:

A. Inspect:

1. The system components.
2. The vent systems, flues, and chimney.

B. Describe

1. The fireplaces and solid fuel burning appliances.
2. The chimneys.
3. Notify the client that solid fuel burning appliances must be inspected by the local fire department.

12.2 The inspector is NOT required to:

A. Inspect:

1. The interiors of flues or chimneys.
2. The firescreens and doors.
3. The seals and gaskets.
4. The automatic fuel feed devices.
5. The mantels and fireplace surrounds.
6. The combustion make-up air devices.
7. The heat distribution assists whether gravity controlled or fan assisted.

B. Ignite or extinguish fires.

C. Determine draft characteristics

D. Move fireplace inserts or stoves or firebox contents.

13 General limitations and exclusions

13.1 General limitations:

A. Inspections performed in accordance with these Standards of Practice

1. Are not technically exhaustive.
2. Will not identify concealed conditions or latent defects.

B. These Standards of Practice are applicable to buildings with four or fewer dwelling units and their garages or carports that are attached.

13.2 General exclusions

A. The inspector is not required to perform any action or make any determination unless specifically stated in these Standards of Practice, except as may be required by lawful authority.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

B. Inspectors are NOT required to determine:

1. The condition or systems or components which are not readily accessible.
2. The remaining life of any system or component.
3. The strength, adequacy, effectiveness, or efficiency of any system or component.
4. The causes of any condition or deficiency.
5. The methods, materials, or costs of corrections.
6. Future conditions including, but not limited to, failure of systems and components.
7. The suitability of the property for any specialized use.
8. Compliance with regulatory requirements (codes, regulations, laws, ordinances, etc.).
9. The market value of the property or its marketability.
10. The advisability of the purchase of the property.
11. The presence of potentially hazardous plants or animals including, but not limited to wood destroying organisms or diseases harmful to humans.
12. The presence of any environmental hazards including, but not limited to toxins, carcinogens, noise, and contaminants in soil, water, and air.
13. The effectiveness of any system installed or methods utilized to control or remove suspected hazardous substances.
14. The operating costs of systems or components.
15. The acoustical properties of any system or component.

C. Inspectors are NOT required to offer:

1. Or perform any act or service contrary to law.
2. Or perform engineering services.
3. Or perform work in any trade or any professional service other than home inspection.
4. Warranties or guarantees of any kind.

D. Inspectors are NOT required to operate:

1. Any system or component which is shut down or otherwise inoperable.
2. Any system or component which does not respond to normal operating controls.
3. Shut-off valves.

E. Inspectors are NOT required to enter:

1. Any area which will, in the opinion of the inspector, likely be dangerous to the inspector or other persons or damage the property or its systems or components.
2. The under-floor crawl spaces or attics, which are not readily accessible.

F. Inspectors are NOT required to inspect:

1. Underground items including, but not limited to underground storage tanks or other underground indications of their presence, whether abandoned or active.
2. Systems or components which are not installed.
3. Decorative items.
4. Systems or components located in areas that are not entered in accordance with these Standards of Practice.
5. Detached structures other than garages and carports.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

6. Common elements or common areas in multiunit housing, such as condominium properties or cooperative housing, except essential items.

G. Inspectors are NOT required to :

1. Perform any procedure or operation, which will, in the opinion of the inspector, likely be dangerous to the inspector or other persons or damage the property or its systems or components.
2. Move personal property, furniture, equipment, plants, soil, snow, ice, or debris.
3. Dismantle any system or component, except as explicitly required by these Standards of Practice.

14 Glossary

Alarm Systems: Warning devices, installed or freestanding, including but not limited to: carbon monoxide detectors, flue gas and other spillage detectors, security equipment, ejector pumps and smoke alarms.

Architectural Service: Any practice involving the art and science of building design for construction of any structure or grouping of structures and the use of space within and surrounding the structures or the design for construction, including but not specifically limited to, schematic design, design development, preparation of construction contract documents, and administration of the construction contract.

Associate Home Inspector: Is a person who is employed by a licensed home inspector to conduct a home inspection of a residential building on behalf of a client for a fee under the direct supervision of the licensed home inspector and is licensed pursuant to the provisions of RIGL 5-65.1.

Board: Is the Contractors' Registration Board.

Client: Is any person who engages, or seeks to engage, the services of a home inspector for the purpose of obtaining an inspection of and written report upon the condition of a residential building.

Component: A part of a system.

Common Elements: All portions of a condominium other than the units.

Condominium: Real estate, portions of which are designated for separate ownership and the remainder of which is designated for common ownership solely by the owners of those portions. Real estate is not a condominium unless the undivided interests in the common elements are vested in the unit owners.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

Decorative: Ornamental; not required for the operation of the essential systems and components of a home.

Detached Structure: Any structure in excess of 200 square feet; or connected to the primary dwelling by any of its essential elements.

Describe: To report system or component by its type or other observed, significant characteristics to distinguish it from other systems or components.

Dismantle: To take apart or remove any component, device or piece of equipment that would not be taken apart or removed by a homeowner in the course of normal and routine home owner maintenance.

Engineering Service: Any professional service or creative work requiring engineering education, training, and experience and the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical and engineering sciences to such professional service or creative work as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design and supervision of construction for the purpose of assuring compliance with the specifications and design, in conjunction with structures, buildings, machines, equipment, works or processes.

Essential Items: Areas such as, heating plumbing, roofs, entrance, mechanical , electrical, water that are mutually shared and directly attributed to the unit being inspected.

Further Evaluation: Examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman or service technician beyond that provided by the home inspector.

Home Inspector: Any person licensed as a home inspector to conduct a home inspection of a residential building on behalf of a client for a fee pursuant to the provisions of chapter 65.1.

Home Inspection: An inspection and written evaluation of the following readily visible and accessible components of a residential building: heating, cooling, plumbing and electrical systems, structural components, foundation, roof masonry structure, exterior and interior components and any other related residential housing components, unless the scope of the inspection is otherwise clearly limited in writing in the inspection report. Unless otherwise expressly agreed to in writing, a home inspection is based solely on observation of the readily visible and apparent condition of the foregoing components of a residential building as they exist on the date of the inspection, and it is not the purpose of such an inspection to identify violations of or noncompliance with governmental codes or regulations. A home inspection shall , at a minimum, conform with any standards of practice promulgated by the board.

Household Appliances: Kitchen, laundry, and similar appliances, whether installed or freestanding.

Inspect: To examine readily accessible systems and components of a building in accordance with these standards of practice, using normal operating controls and opening readily openable access panels.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

Installed: Attached such that removal requires tools.

Limited Common Element: A portion of the common elements allocated by the declaration or by operation of RIGL 34-36.1-2.02(2) or (4) for the exclusive use of one or more but fewer than all of the units.

Normal Operating Controls: Devices such as thermostats, switches or valves intended to be operated by the homeowner.

Outbuilding: A free standing structure not connected in anyway to the primary dwelling. (Unless mutually agreed to be part of the inspection by the client)

Public Body or Agency: Any executive, legislative, judicial, regulatory or administrative body of the state or any political subdivision thereof: including, but not limited to, public officials elected or appointed and any department, division, agency, commission, board, office, bureau, authority, any school, fire, or water district, or other agency or quasi-public agency of state or local government which exercises governmental functions.

Readily Accessible: Available for visual inspection without requiring moving of personal property, dismantling, destructive measures, or any action which will likely involve risk to persons or property.

Readily Openable Access Panel: A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance, which can be removed by one person, and is not sealed in place.

Recreational Facilities: Hot tubs, spas, saunas, steam baths, swimming pools, exercise, entertainment, athletic, playground or other similar equipment and associated accessories.

Report: To communicate in writing.

Representative Number: One component per room for multiple similar interior components such as windows and electric outlets: one component on each side of the building for multiple similar exterior components.

Residential Building: A structure consisting of one (1) to four (4) family dwelling units that has been occupied as such prior to the time when a home inspection is requested or contracted for in accordance with chapter 5-65.1 of the General Laws, but shall not include any such structure newly constructed and not previously occupied.

Roof Drainage Systems: Components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

Significantly Deficient: Unsafe or not functioning.

Shut Down: A state in which a system or component cannot be operated by normal operating controls.

Proposed Standards for Home Inspectors

Solid Fuel Burning Appliances: A hearth and fire chamber or similar prepared place in which a fire may be built and which is built in conjunction with a chimney; or a listed assembly of a fire chamber, its chimney and related factory-made parts designed for unit assembly without requiring field construction.

Structural Component: A component that supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

System: A combination of interacting or interdependent components, assembled to carry out one or more functions.

Technically Exhaustive: An investigation that involves dismantling, the extensive use of advanced techniques, measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, or other means.

Under-floor Crawl Space: The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the floor.

Unit: A physical portion of the condominium designated for separate ownership of occupancy, the boundaries of which are described pursuant to RIGL 34-36.1-2.05(a)(5).

Unsafe: A condition in a readily accessible, installed system or component which is judged to be a significant risk of personal injury during normal, day-to day use. The risk may be due to damage, deterioration, improper installation or a change in accepted residential construction standards.

Window Style Air Conditioner: A unit placed in a window or sleeve that is easily removed.

Wiring Methods: Identification of electrical conductors or wires by their general type, such as "non-metallic sheathed cable" ("Romex"), "armored cable" ("bx") or "knob and tube", etc.